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Final D Research Paper

What will happen while

acclimating to a new culture?

As soon as students finish their high school studies, they looked for a suitable job or the way to get it. Usually studying abroad is the most guaranteed way to increase their opportunity to find their “dream” jobs. However, in order to get the degree by studying abroad, student’s way will not be furnished with flowers. As Raquel Faria Chapdelaine and Louise R.Alexitch say in their article “Social Skills Difficulty: Model of Culture Shock for International Graduate Students”, “researchers and theorists agree that this population [International students] experiences an array of difficulties in their sojourn” (par.3). They experience difficulty because of the differences between their own cultures and that’s of the United States. Examples of these dissimilarities are the weather, the way of life, and being independent. Usually the first days in a new country for international students are exciting and new. That’s why some people call it “honeymoon” period (“Cultural adaptation” slide 3). Whereas after a while, students find everything boring, nothing is exciting anymore, and they start to miss their home and culture. Therefore, they get sick of culture shock’s “disease” (Chapdelaine & Alexitch par.5). After that, they feel homesick and that makes them start to hate the new culture. Even though students face a hard time when living this feeling, they still get some benefits from experiencing this common feeling. Robert Kohls said in Henya Kagan and Jo Cohen research article ”Culture Shock” “One of the biggest revaluations a person can have [Culture Shock]. It teaches you about yourself” (par.10). That’s because the student will be forced to depend or rely only on him/herself; therefore, students will know exactly what they really need and what they don’t. As long as it is possible and normal for international students to feel homesick or culture shock, what are the reasons, symptoms, consequences, and the solutions when living this feeling?

To know what are the reasons that cause these feelings, I made a survey of two questions. I surveyed 20 International students from 8 different countries - South Korea, Kazakhstan, China, Japan, UAE, Taiwan, Colombia, and Saudi Arabia. 90% in their senior or at the end of their junior year. Also, The students that I have asked were almost reaching their goals. People are the same, they did it. So, you can make it; just do it.

The first question asked about the reason of the homesickness. Respondents indicated these results:- 60% said missing home and family, 35% said having free time without activates to do, 0% for study pressure, and 5% for other reasons. It’s not surprising that 60% missing their home and family because, at first, I thought it is the only reason. Nobody, shockingly, complained of study pressure. I thought that having free time without doing anything would be the most “chosen” reason especially because they (student been asked) are in Michigan. That’s because Michigan is too cold in the winter, so nobody can go anywhere, which may be a strong reason for feeling homesick.

Culture shock is a “degree of social difficulty incountered in cross-cultural interaction”(Chapdelaine & Alexitch par.3). As any other “disease,” culture shock has some known and serious symptoms or signs. According to Catherine McCrane Keating in her article “Culture Shock”, these symptoms can be classified to two parts, which is physical and psychological symptoms (par.7). Inability to sleep, digestive problems, and mood disturbances are some examples of physical symptoms (Keating par.7; “Cultural Adaptation” slide 5). Whereas psychological symptoms can be defined as anxiety, suspicion, depression, and boredom or fatigue (Keating par.7). The reason why students experience these symptoms is either they miss their home and family too much or they were independent people.

According to the above, this disaster has some difficult symptoms, which may lead to serious consequences. Let’s take Insomnia as an example. Insomnia is one of the first noticeable symptoms that people can know that this person experiencing or feeling homesick or culture shock. Insomnia means , in one word, sleeplessness. Lack of sleep leads to less focus and that’s will affect students’ studies and grades. As well as less concentration can be harmful; Insomnia may also increase absences and tardiness percentage for this category of people. That’s because these students did not get enough sleep during the night, which is 8 hour for normal person. By not getting enough sleep, the percentage of not being able to wake up higher than the percentage of being able to do so. Yet another example of how culture shock may affect student’s studies, When having digestive problems, student will have to see the doctor. Logically, in order to see the doctor, the student have to schedule an appointment with the doctor. This appointment will force the student to be absent of some or all of his/her classes. Also, being sick will reduce the concentration, which will affect the student’s studies. In short, culture shock has some serious symptoms such as insomnia, which may affect international students’ grades in a negative way.

In my culture, Arabic, there is a well-known quote says “Every single disease has his own medicine somewhere” and regarding to this quote there is a solution for this disaster that spread to every single international student outside their countries. My curiosity pushed me strongly to ask the same 20 international students that I have asked in my survey to give me their opinions about culture shock’s solution. The respondents reported 55% chose (call friends to hang out) as their solutions when feeling homesick. However, 30% of them said “search on the internet for something to kill the time”. None of them of them stayed in home without doing anything when feeling homesick. Whereas 15% of this group preferred to pick “other solutions” as their best answer such as call family, play sports, and look at picture have ben taken in their own countries. Although they are different students form different countries having different opinions; what really important is that there is a solution for feeling homesick. We can see that nobody of them chose “stay without doing anything”, which confirm that there is a solution for having culture shock. There are many things students can do to forget the homesick such as playing sports, video games, looking at previous pictures, calling family and many others. Culture shock obstacles usually disappear after 8-12 months and the students eventually find their ways to acclimating and assimilating to that new culture.

The more people choose high and best goals, the more possible to face more difficulties. International students tend to feel excited and happy when they first visit a new country (honeymoon), but this happiness usually changes slightly to be culture shock at the end. After a while these students start to recognize the way of life and find answers for many questions, which helped them acclimate to the new country. From my perspective, international students are able to overcome this disease by living their life without paying to much attention or scare themselves because as I said people are the same. Many students have done it [overcoming this problem] and you can make it. Therefore, Just do it.

Survey Question

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Country:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* As an international student, it is possible that you have felt homesick:- What do you think the reason Is:-

1. Missing home or family.
2. Having free time without activities to do.
3. Having a lot of HW or Tests (study pressure).
4. Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

* What do you usually do when you feel homesick in order to remove the feeling.

1. Call friends to hang out.

1. Search on the Internet for something to kill the time.
2. Stay without doing anything.
3. Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Thanks so much 🡪 Obaid Almurri

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